INTERSECTING CULTURAL BELIEFS IN SOCIAL RELATIONS:

Gender, Race, and Class Binds and Freedoms

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We develop an evidence-based theoretical account of how widely shared cultural beliefs about gender, race, and class intersect in interpersonal and other social relational contexts in the United States to create characteristic cultural "binds" and freedoms for actors in those contexts. We treat gender, race, and class as systems of inequality that are culturally constructed as distinct but implicitly overlap through their defining beliefs, which reflect the perspectives of dominant groups in society. We cite evidence for the contextually contingent interactional "binds" and freedoms this creates for people such as Asian men, Black women, and poor whites who are not prototypical of images embedded in cultural gender, race, and class beliefs. All forms of unprototypicality create "binds," but freedoms result from being unprototypical of disadvantaging rather than advantaging statuses.

An important but difficult challenge facing contemporary gender scholars lies in specifying how the system of macro-, meso-, and micro-level social processes that jointly create gender inequality systematically intersect with those that produce inequality based on race and social class (Collins 1990; Glenn 1999). In this article, we address a modest part of this complex problem. We consider how widely shared cultural beliefs

about gender, race, and class, which have been shown to shape interpersonal behavior on their own, might intersect in social relational contexts to create characteristic cultural "binds" (and sometimes freedoms) for actors. By "social relational contexts" we mean interpersonal settings, but also other situations in which actors must take the expected reactions of others into account in deciding how to act themselves (Ridgeway and Correll 2004). Our goal is to develop an initial, admittedly provisional, theoretical analysis of these intersectional processes in social relational contexts and describe evidence in support of our account. A systematic account of intersectional processes at the social relational level is important because individuals' multiple characteristics are most often simultaneously present at that level (West and Fenstermaker 1995).

In developing this account we have two goals that follow from our micro–macro focus. We wish, first, to take advantage of recent social psychological and sociocognitive research on how people perceive and make sense of others and relate to those others on the basis of such understandings (e.g., Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2007; Freeman and Ambady 2011). Second, we wish to link this psychological research with sociological understandings of gender, race, and class as systems of inequality that involve both cultural beliefs and material arrangements (e.g., Beisel and Kay 2004; Glenn 1999; Risman 2004). Our strategy for pursuing these goals is to draw out the general theoretical framework of a recent account developed to understand how cultural beliefs about gender shape social relations (Ridgeway 2011; Ridgeway and Correll 2004) and attempt to expand this abstracted framework to illuminate the intersection of gender, race, and class in social relations. We do not intend to privilege any one system of social hierarchy over another or make any claims about their relative importance for unequal social outcomes among individuals.

We begin by clarifying how we conceptualize gender, race, and class as systems or cultural logics of inequality. Then, to further specify how these systems might intersect in social relations, we expand arguments about the way people use cultural beliefs about gender to coordinate behavior to incorporate the effects of cultural beliefs about race and class on social relations. These arguments claim that common gender, race, and class stereotypes represent the perspectives of dominant groups. We consider how the shared perspective of dominant groups might cause the content of gender and racial stereotypes, in particular, to overlap in specific ways. Next, in our central arguments, we consider how the overlapping content of these stereotypes create characteristic binds and freedoms for "off diagonal" people—people not closely represented by the prototypical

images embedded in cultural stereotypes of gender, race, and class (e.g., Black women, Asian men, and poor whites). As we develop these analyses, we review evidence in support of them. We conclude by considering the implications of our intersectional analysis for the reproduction and change of the widely shared cultural beliefs that provide the schemas for enacting and justifying gender, race, and class as systems of inequality.

SYSTEMS OF INEQUALITY CULTURALLY UNDERSTOOD AS DISTINCT

We first need to consider whether gender, race, and class are inherently intertwined to generate a multifaceted system of inequality or whether they are distinct but related systems of inequality that systematically intersect in certain social contexts to generate patterns of inequalities (Browne and Misra 2003; Collins 1999; Crenshaw 1989; Glenn 1999; McCall 2005). Given that we always confront one another as complex, multiattributed individuals, it is striking that abstract, cultural ideas of "men" and "women," "whites," "Blacks," "Asians," and "rich" or "poor" exist. Yet Americans readily describe these categories and talk in terms of them. In studies of contemporary group stereotypes, for instance, multiple samples of Americans, when asked to name important groups in society, spontaneously generated these categories and had no difficulty answering questions about how these groups were viewed in American society (Fiske et al. 2002).

In this article, we take this routine disaggregation of gender, race, and class in common, everyday discourse as a *cultural construction that is real in its consequences*. That is, we consider gender, race, and class as culturally distinct systems of difference and inequality not because they really are separate, but because people routinely understand them to be so, and that has consequences. In particular, we will argue that it is the cultural construction of these systems as explicitly distinct when they implicitly overlap in their meanings which creates characteristic inter- actional binds and freedoms for actors.

To provide a general framework for understanding gender, race, and class as culturally distinct systems of hierarchy that nevertheless intersect in social relations, we approach each as a structure with an inherently "dual" aspect. Following Sewell (1992) and others (cf. Beisel and Kay 2004; Risman 2004), we understand each structure of inequality to

consist, on the one hand, of cultural schemas for enacting that structure (e.g., widely shared cultural beliefs about gender or race or class) and, on the other, of the material distributions of behaviors, resources, and power that result (gender, race, or class hierarchies). Finally, we argue that the cultural schemas that define the gender, race, and class systems are, in effect, widely shared cultural stereotypes of men versus women, whites versus various peoples of color, and middle-class versus working-class people (Ridgeway and Correll 2004).

Systems of inequality, by this approach, intersect when their cultural schemas have implications for the same set of resources (Beisel and Kay 2004; Sewell 1992). In social relational contexts, an important resource for individuals is the standing they attain in the behavioral hierarchies of influence, status, and perceived suitability for leadership that commonly develop in interpersonal contexts, particularly goal-oriented ones such as those in the workplace (Berger and Webster 2006). Such behavioral hierarchies in interpersonal relations have significant consequences for their participants because they direct some individuals toward and others away from positions of power and resources in society (e.g., jobs and promotions). For this reason, we focus our intersectional analysis primarily on these interpersonal inequalities in status and influence. To the extent that gender and race or class are each sufficiently salient in a given context to mutually shape the hierarchies of influence and status that emerge, their associated cultural belief systems will overlap for participants in the setting.

CULTURAL BELIEFS AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

We now need a more specific framework for understanding how cultural rules for hierarchy based on gender, race, and class each shape everyday social relations in ways that produce unequal outcomes. Here we expand on existing arguments about how people use gender as a "primary cultural frame" for organizing their social relations with others (Ridgeway 2011).

Gender and Race as Primary Frames

Social relations, whether in person or even in imagination, require us to find a way to coordinate with the other. To do that, we need some way to anticipate the other's behavior so we can decide how to act ourselves. A diverse range of research suggests that people solve this problem by

categorizing the other, and, by comparison, themselves, according to widely shared, "common knowledge" cultural codes of social difference[1] (Chwe 2001; Ridgeway 2011; Stryker and Vryan 2003; West and Fenstermaker 1995). These cultural beliefs about social difference are shared stereotypes, but their significance conveys more than many associate with that term. Because they provide an initial basis for deciding "who" the other is, who we are in comparison, and therefore how each of us is likely to behave, they play a powerful role in organizing social relations.

To organize interaction in real time, some of these cultural codes for categorizing others must be so simplified that they can be applied to virtually any other in order to initiate the process of defining "self" and "other" in that situation. Social cognition research suggests that only a small number—about three or so—of category systems act as such *primary frames* for social relations in a given culture (Brewer 1988). These frames are "primary" not because they are necessarily most important for personal identity or most determinative of social outcomes but because they act as simplified, culturally provided starting points for sociocognitive person construal. Evidence suggests that sex, race, and age are primary categories of person perception in the United States (Brewer and Lui 1989; Schneider 2004, 96).[2]

Further evidence shows that people in the United States automatically and nearly instantly categorize any person they deal with in terms of sex and race (Ito and Urland 2003; Macrae and Quadflieg 2010). People will categorize others on sex and race on the basis of quite minimal cues even though they may then recategorize a person if more cues become available. A person's automatic sex and race categorization of another is important because it implicitly frames the person's subsequent understanding of that other. Further categorizations of the other in terms of institutional roles (a clerk, a coworker) or contextual identities (pedestrian) are nested in the prior understanding of the person as a man or woman and as a given race, and take on a slightly different meaning as a result (Brewer 1988; Freeman and Ambady 2011).

Speed of racial categorization has been studied almost entirely in terms of Black-white distinctions (Ito and Urland 2003), but other racial categorizations, such as Asian or Latino, are likely to be similarly fast and automatic. Although we fully recognize the problems of doing so, we limit our analysis of race in this paper to Black-white and Asian-white distinctions, due to space limitations and the restricted body of sociocognitive studies of other racial distinctions.

In social relational contexts, sex and race categorization unconsciously prime gender and race stereotypes in the perceiver's mind, making those cultural beliefs cognitively available to implicitly shape the perceiver's judgments and behaviors in response to the other (Macrae and Quadflieg 2010). Importantly, however, the extent to which these mentally primed stereotypes actually do bias the perceiver's responses varies from negligible to substantial depending on features of the *context* and, thus, context is fundamental to their effects (Kunda and Spencer 2003). What matters is the extent to which the sex or race categorization of the other seems to the perceiver to offer usefully diagnostic information about the other in that situation. At the least, evidence indicates that gender and race stereotypes are *effectively salient* (i.e., sufficiently salient to measurably bias judgments and behavior) in contexts in which the participants differ on the characteristic (mixed-sex or mixed-race settings) or that are culturally linked to the characteristics (gender- or race-associated contexts, which can include same-sex or same-race contexts) (see Berger and Webster 2006). In addition, perceivers apply stereotypes more strongly in their responses to others who appear more *prototypical* of the category (Macrae and Quadflieg 2010).

Thus, the more gender or race stands out in a situation because it differentiates the people there and/or seems relevant to the goals of the setting or to the characteristics of a participant, the more a perceiver's responses will be biased by widely shared gender and race stereotypes. This means that although both gender and race are virtually always cognitively available to shape judgments and behavior in social relational contexts, they need not do so equally in a given situation. Depending on the context, one or the other may have a stronger impact.

The contents of widely known gender and race stereotypes differ in many ways, but research suggests that they have in common the inclusion of beliefs that people in one category of the difference (men, whites) are of higher status and diffusely more competent, especially at the things that count most in society, than are those in the other category (women, people of color) (Fiske 2010). Thus, to the extent that gender or race stereotypes are salient in a setting, they bias expectations for one person's competence and suitability for leadership compared to another (Berger and Webster 2006). These biased expectations tend to have self-fulfilling effects on behavior in the setting and to create inequalities in evaluations of performance, influence, and attributions of ability (Berger and Webster 2006). In this way, among others, implicitly salient gender and race stereotypes shape interpersonal hierarchies of influence, status,

and perceived leadership potential in ways that reproduce and maintain gender and race as systems of inequality. Since these interpersonal hierarchies constitute a shared resource domain for the gender and race (and class) systems, when the hierarchies that emerge in a given relational context are shaped by both gender and race stereotypes, the gender and race systems intersect in that context.

Class in Social Relations

Although we have known since Bourdieu (1984) that class can be highly consequential for interpersonal relations, social cognition studies have not examined class categorization in detail. Sociocognitive studies of the superordinate, "master," versus secondary categories into which people place others (e.g., Brewer and Lui 1989; Stangor et al. 1992) clearly demonstrate that gender and race are primary (i.e., superordinate) cultural frames for person perception but are less definitive about class. Studies show that one class indicator, occupation, is a subordinate category of person perception in comparison to gender (Brewer 1988; van Kippenenburg and Dijkhuis 2000), but there is less evidence about other aspects of class categorization in relation to either gender or race. More research is necessary to determine if class is a primary, "master" category of person perception in the United States or whether class indicators are cognitively nested within prior categorizations of a person in terms of gender and race (and age).

Whether or not people automatically and instantly categorize one another on class as they do sex and race, a variety of research suggests that people are quite sensitive to cues of class difference (e.g., accent, dress, and speech) in everyday interaction (Fiske 2010). Therefore, if class differences are present among interactants, they are likely to become implicitly salient in the situation before very long (Ridgeway and Fisk 2012). There are also widely shared cultural stereotypes about class that closely link class standing with status and competence (Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2007; Fiske et al. 2002). We would expect, then, that once class difference becomes salient for people in a situation, class stereotypes implicitly bias their behaviors and judgments of each other's competence in a similar process to that we have described for gender and race stereotypes (Fiske 2010; Ridgeway and Fisk 2012). Research clearly shows that class indicators, such as occupational status and education, systematically bias competence expectations, social influence, and leadership in interactional contexts (Webster and Foschi 1988). More

subtle indicators of differences in cultural class background likely create similar biasing effects (Stuber 2006).

Yet, despite these similarities, we argue that an important difference remains between the ways that cultural beliefs about class shape interpersonal relations compared to cultural beliefs about gender and race. Dominant American beliefs view class as an achieved and potentially transient attribute in contrast to the highly essentialized popular views of sex and race (Kluegel and Smith 1986; Morning 2011; Prentice and Miller 2006), despite the fact that, in social relations, gender, race, and class are all interactional accomplishments (West and Fenstermaker 1995). The essentialized cultural conception of gender and race, compared to class, is real in its consequences. The cues on which we categorize people on sex and race are commonly seen as stable, inherent, visually apparent, and trans-situationally present aspects of a person, attributes that would always be there if we imagined the person, in contrast to the cues by which we class categorize, such as education, occupation, or accent, which are viewed as more acquired and potentially changeable.

This difference in essentialization, we argue, has important implications for intersectionality. Culturally essentialized attributes are traits that a culture deems "always there" in a person. If both gender and race are essentialized in the United States, then they must *both* be always there in any cultural prototype of a "person." The more essentialized the cultural image of "men" or "women" is, the more that gender image in the U.S. context must also be implicitly raced. Similarly, an essentialized image of "Black" or "white" or "Asian" must also be implicitly gendered. If cultural beliefs about class are less essentialized, as we have argued, then class is a little different from gender and race in this sociocognitive regard, even though class, too, when salient in a situation, powerfully shapes behavioral inequalities among the participants. We argue that this sociocognitive difference is significant because it causes aspects of class meanings to sometimes additively combine while also intersecting in other ways as race and gender do.

OVERLAPPING HEGEMONIC STEREOTYPES

Widely shared gender, race, and class stereotypes are hegemonic beliefs because they are not simply held by individuals but institutional-ized in the media, in the images of people implied in organizational

structures, in laws, and in the arrangement of public spaces (Acker 2006; Ridgeway 2011). Indeed, the power of these gender, race, and class beliefs to coordinate behavior in social relations derives not so much from individuals' personal endorsement of them (and many do not) as from individuals' sense that these beliefs are what "most people" believe and thus are the public rules by which they will be judged and expected to act. The hegemonic nature of these beliefs is what allows them to act as cultural schemas for enacting systems of inequality (Sewell 1992).

An obvious implication, however, is that the versions of gender, race, and class beliefs that become institutionalized and, therefore, shared as cultural knowledge by dominants and subdominants alike, are likely to be the versions that most closely represent the experiences of these distinctions by dominant social groups. These are the groups who have the most power to shape these social institutions. Social differences are typically perceived in terms of contrasts with a taken-for-granted, dominant standard. From this perspective, gender, race, and class differences should be defined in hegemonic beliefs as dimensions of implicit contrast with the most dominant group, white, middle-class men. What are the implications of this for the potential overlap in content in gender and race stereotypes?

Gender and Race

If difference is defined from the perspective of dominant (white male) groups, it seems clear that the prototypical images that become embedded in widely shared and institutionalized images of "men" and "women" should implicitly correspond to white men and white women. And, since gender is "marked" by the implicit contrast of the "feminine" against the male standard, femininity as a marker of the gender hierarchy should be implicitly linked most prescriptively to white women.

If race is embedded in hegemonic gender beliefs, gender is also embedded in the prototypical images associated with widely shared, hegemonic white-Black and white-Asian racial stereotypes. Our arguments about how difference is defined from the perspective of dominant groups imply that race is another sort of contrast against the white male standard. As a different dimension of contrast, it is almost by definition not focused on men's difference from women. But as a result, it implicitly becomes a difference between types of men hierarchically defined as superior (white) and lesser (Black or Asian). This suggests that

white-Black and white-Asian racial hierarchies are likely to be implicitly represented as subordinated types of masculinities (either too masculine or not masculine enough) that are contrasted against the hegemonic, "just right" masculinity of the white male standard (Chen 1999; Connell 1995; Messner 1992).

The contrasting masculinities embedded in white-Black American stereotypes distinctively reflect their historical origins in the violence of slavery. Research suggests that the implicit Black image is of physically powerful masculinity that is relatively extreme and potentially threatening compared to the white standard of "civilized," constrained, and socially based masculine power (Goff et al. 2008). In contrast, while cultural beliefs about Asians have changed over historical periods, contemporary U.S. racial stereotypes implicitly prototype Asians as more feminine than the white male standard and irreducibly "foreign" (Chen 1999; Espiritu 1997; Wu 2002).

These arguments about the implicit prototypical images evoked by hegemonic stereotypes of gender and white-Black and white-Asian race are troubling for the shameful racism they reveal behind these "common knowledge" stereotypes. Yet, they are supported by recent evidence. Documenting the implicitly gendered images of racial stereotypes, Galinsky, Hall, and Cuddy (forthcoming) found that Black men and women were rated as more masculine (vigorous, strong, masculine) and less feminine (gentle, feminine), while Asian men and women were rated as less masculine and more feminine compared to white men and women. Wilkins, Chan, and Kaiser (2011) report similar results and also found that the more stereotypically Asian a man's appearance, the less masculine he was rated as appearing (although there were no such associations for Asian women). Galinsky, Hall, and Cuddy (forthcoming) also found an association between gender and race stereotypes at the implicit level. When subliminally primed with "Black," subjects responded more quickly to masculine trait words; when primed with "Asian," they responded more quickly to feminine trait words, compared to when primed with "white."

In a provocative study, Goff, Thomas, and Jackson (2008) found that Black faces (male and female) were rated as more masculine than white faces. Strikingly, they also found that pictures of Black women's faces were much more likely to be mistaken as male (about 13 percent errors) than were those of white women (2 percent errors) even though sex categorization errors were low overall. There were no such race differences in the likelihood that Black men's and white men's faces (errors about 1.75 percent vs. 0.75 percent) were incorrectly sex categorized.

In a sophisticated set of studies, Johnson, Freeman, and Pauker (2012) investigated how the overlap between race (Black, white, Asian) and gender stereotypes shape sex categorization. Like Goff et al. (2008), they found that male faces were more easily sex categorized overall (reflecting the male standard) and outright errors in sex categorization were low. But in comparison to whites, Black faces were easier to classify as male and harder to classify as female, while Asian faces were more easily classified as female and slower to classify as male. They found these associations at both the implicit and explicit levels.

Adding Class

Stereotypes of class represent the perspective of dominant groups as well, but we have argued that class stereotypes do not evoke as highly essentialized prototypical images as gender and race do. Perhaps for that reason, it is our impression that stereotypes of "middle class" and "working class" do not carry within them strong implications about the gendered characteristics of the prototypical member of the category.

On the other hand, it seems clear that class is deeply embedded in our essentialized prototypes of Black–white (cf. Feagin 1991) and Asian–white (Espiritu 1997; Wu 2002) race, reflecting the strong association between race and socioeconomic standing in the United States. Fiske et al. (2002), in their study of how a variety of social groups clustered together on stereotypical competence and warmth, found that "whites" and "middle-class people" were closely clustered, as were "Blacks" and "blue-collar people." Class is part of what it means to be "white" or "Black."

In a striking demonstration of this last point, Saperstein and Penner (2102) showed that, in longitudinal data from a representative sample of Americans, individuals who were unemployed, incarcerated, or impoverished in a given wave of the survey were more likely to be categorized by the interviewer as Black and less likely to be seen as white regardless of how they had been categorized in previous waves of the survey. The authors and colleagues also experimentally varied the class background of faces of differing whiteness or Blackness and found that clothing representative of a lower class increased categorization of the same face as Black rather than white (Freeman et al. 2011).

In a follow-up study, Penner and Saperstein (2013) further showed that socioeconomic changes, such as unemployment and marriage, "blackened" or "whitened" men and women equally, while more gender-typed

socioeconomic changes, like incarceration for men and welfare for women, affected the racial classification of men and women differentially. This suggests that the way socioeconomic changes affected a person's racial classification also implicitly took into account that these people, as "persons," must also be of a given sex. Although linkages between class and race implicitly took sex into account, there seemed to be no direct connection between class and sex in that there was no detectable association between changes in people's socioeconomic status and how they were sex categorized. This suggests that class is more deeply and directly embedded in race than gender protoypes.[3]

While, in the Fiske et al. (2002) study, whites as a group clustered with "middle class," "Asians" clustered together with "professionals" and the "educated," a slightly higher-class image. Thus, there is less of a class contrast in cultural beliefs about whites and Asians in that both are seen as middle-class. Yet, as many have observed, the stereotype of Asians as class advantaged, yet "foreign," is a sometimes dangerous source of envy and resentment by the dominant group (Fiske 2010; Wu 2002).

These studies of the deep linkage between class and white–Black and white–Asian race suggest that the automatic racial categorization of another also implicitly evokes a default assumption about that person's class location. The default assumptions about class embedded in racial prototypes create intersectional effects. A white person dressed in jeans and a T-shirt can shop comfortably at an expensive store, but a similarly dressed Black person, even if affluent, arouses suspicion (Feagin 1991). Dominant American beliefs that class is a less essentialized and potentially more variable attribute than race matter here, however. Contextual cues of class, if sufficiently salient, can weaken default class assumptions based on racial categorization. The same Black person treated with suspicion in the store may be accepted as middle-class when encountered at work in a hospital dressed as a surgeon.

Perhaps because Americans view class (and its dominant indicators of occupation, education, and income) as fundamentally achieved rather than ascribed, it seems to be especially strongly associated with beliefs about differences in competence. In major stereotype studies, correlations approach .90 (Fiske 2010). Both the close association of class with competence and the less essentialized nature of class stereotypes may sometimes allow class to act as a more "fungible" social difference than race or gender. That is, an individual's particular class "accomplishments" (education, a prestigious job), when salient in an interactional context, may partially compensate for race or gender status disadvantages in a

more additive way than is typical for the complex intersections of race or gender, even though class also intersects with race through the default class assumptions that are embedded in racial prototypes. This suggests that in the workplace and other task- and competence-oriented contexts, the *competence* implications of class accomplishments (although not necessarily other implications of class) may combine with the competence implications of race or gender to affect the perceived competence and influence of individuals. Research based on status characteristics theory (Berger and Webster 2006) has shown that the competence implications of gender (Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 1999) and white–Black race (Webster and Driskell Jr. 1978) effectively combine with skill-based status characteristics (e.g., math or language ability) and class indicators like education and occupation to affect a person's status and influence in task-oriented settings. At the level of hegemonic cultural beliefs, the "fungiblity" of class may mean that people easily draw on class meanings to explain and justify other systems of inequality (e.g., race), thereby embedding class meanings within the beliefs about those other inequalities.

INTERSECTIONAL BINDS AND FREEDOMS

Now let's consider the implications of overlapping prototypical images associated with widely shared gender, race, and class stereotypes when they become effectively salient in social relational contexts. As we will see, the nature of the relational context is key to the type of effects that occur.

Gender and Race Binds

In social relational contexts, such as the workplace or a social gathering, not only will people have automatically sex- and race-categorized one another, but gender and race stereotypes will have become effectively, if implicitly, salient for them as they begin to relate to one another in the setting. The essentialized, prototypical images evoked by these stereotypes will correspond to the individuals in the situation in significantly different degrees. Other things being equal, white men mostly fit the prototype of both "men" and "whites," white women correspond to the prototype of "women," and Black men match the prototype of "Blacks." Because of overlapping stereotype content, Asian women fit reasonably well with the prototype of both "Asians" and "women." But Asian men, while they match the prototype of "Asian," are distinctly "off diagonal"

and nonprototypical as men. As many have commented, however, it is Black women who fit poorly into the implicit prototypes of both gender and white–Black race (e.g., Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1989; hooks 1989). They are the doubly "off diagonal" people in contexts in which race and gender are both salient.

Recall that prototypicality is one of the factors that affects how strongly stereotypes evoked by sex and race categorization shape the perceiver's judgments and behaviors toward the categorized person. Interestingly, this suggests that white men and women and Black men will be judged and treated in more gender and race stereotypic terms than Asian men or Black women. (For white men, of course, this stereotypic treatment will often be advantaging.) Other things being equal, Asian men, in contrast, will be responded to as less like a typical man. Black women will be responded to less like either a typical woman or a typical Black person (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach 2008). Whether this is good or bad depends on the context, but it creates a characteristic set of "binds" and freedoms. Note that the Asian man is unprototypical of an advantaging status, male sex, while the Black woman is unprototypical of two disadvantaging statuses, female sex and race. While all forms of unprototypicality create binds, it may be that freedoms result from being unprototypical of disadvantaging statuses.

One set of "binds" develops from the "intersectional invisibility" that results from being unprototypical of one (Asian men) or two (Black women) of American culture's three or four primary frames for making sense of others and organizing social relations. It is literally harder to be "seen," for your perspective to be heard, or your contributions credited when you don't fit easily with people's automatic lenses for noticing, making sense of, and understanding others, lenses that are institutionalized as well as held by individuals (Cheng 1996; Collins 1999; hooks 1989; Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach 2008; Sesko and Biernat 2010).

Another set of binds develops in a particular type of relational context: one in which gender stereotypes are intensely salient (even though race may also be highly salient) because the setting is focused on heterosexual attraction. Hegemonic stereotypes cast prototypically masculine and prototypically feminine people as the public standard of attractiveness in such contexts, and even though many do not personally endorse these standards, they nevertheless have social effects. Wilkins et al. (2011), for instance, found that for men, being rated as more "stereotypically Asian" in appearance was associated with being seen as less physically attractive and masculine, while Asian appearance did not affect the perceived

attractiveness of women. While most marriages are within race, Wilkins, Chan, and Kaiser (2011) and Galinsky, Hall, and Cuddy (forthcoming) both suggest that the gender–race binds faced by Asian men in contexts of heterosexual attraction may contribute to the fact that, in 2000, 75 percent of Asian–white intermarriages were between white men and Asian women rather than white women and Asian men.

Because Black women are seen as less stereotypically feminine than white or Asian women (Galinsky, Hall, and Cuddy forthcoming; Wilkins, Chan, and Kaiser 2011), they also face cultural binds created by intersecting gender and race stereotypes that put them at a disadvantage in heterosexual relationship markets in comparison to white women, Asian women, and even Black men (who are seen as highly masculine). Galinsky, Hall, and Cuddy (forthcoming) argue that this set of intersectional binds plays a role in the fact that 73 percent of Black–white interracial marriages in the 2000 U.S. Census were between Black men and white women and 86% of Black–Asian marriages were between Black men and Asian women.

Other sorts of cultural binds and, sometimes, freedoms develop for "off diagonal" people in workplace contexts and institutional roles. Cultural binds that create distinctive biases against Black women compared to white or Asian women may develop in roles or jobs that expect a (feminine) deferential, polite manner. These would include institutional roles that are consequential for inequality, such as "patient" dealing with medical authorities or "applicant" dealing with authorities that run government programs. They would also include feminized service jobs like secretary or nurse. Kilbourne, England, and Beron (1994), for instance, found that the wage penalty for working in a predominantly female occupation is twice as large for Black women as for white women.

In other, typically powerful, institutional contexts, however, the advantages are not with being seen as politely feminine but instead as forceful and dominant. Many achievement-oriented contexts focus on agentic behavior and leadership that, in turn, is culturally linked to hegemonic masculinity. This creates a characteristic set of binds for Asian men in the work world. Cheng (1996) reports that when asked to select group leaders, participants prefer those with masculine traits, and when given a choice of several gender and race groups, were least likely to select Asian men. Chen (1999) describes how Asian men develop strategies to "bargain" with these gender–race binds in such settings.

For Black women, in contrast, being outside both gender and race prototypes can create certain freedoms and opportunities in work or other

contexts that value agentic behavior and leadership (Livingston, Shelby, and Washington 2012; Richardson et al. 2011). White women face a well-documented "double bind" when they seek to act highly assertively in order to prove agentic competence and suitability for authority. Such behavior is perceived to violate their prescriptive gender requirement of being femininely "nice" and deferential. As a result, assertive efforts to act authoritatively are perceived as "domineering" coming from white women (but not from white men) and provoke a "backlash" of dislike and resistance from others (Rudman et al. 2012). Although we know of no "backlash" studies of Asian women, our argument suggests that they too would face resistance and dislike when they violate stereotypic gender and race expectations of deference. Indeed, observations that Asian women, though typically stereotyped as docile, are sometimes also viewed as "dragon ladies" may reflect just such a backlash reaction to assertive Asian women (Espiritu 1997).

Dominant behavior from Black men similarly challenges the racial hierarchy. Black men who succeed in the corporate world seem to have had to present a mild appearance to counter stereotypic race expectations that they will be threateningly aggressive (Livingston and Pearce 2009). In contrast, assertively dominant behaviors from Black women, at least in institutional contexts that value agentic behavior, may not provoke such resistance and backlash precisely because they are not seen as either prototypical (white) "women" or prototypical (male) "Blacks." For this reason, their dominance in agentic contexts does not centrally challenge the gender or the racial hierarchy.

In a study that supports these arguments, Livingston, Shelby, and Washington (2012) experimentally varied whether a Black or white, male or female *Fortune* 500 executive was described as handling a meeting with subordinates in an assertive, tough way or in a communal, encouraging way. Participants rated the dominant Black male and white female boss as less effective, less respected, and likely to have a lower salary compared to the dominant white male boss. But this was not the case for the dominant Black woman boss. Like the white man, she was seen as quite effective, respected, and well paid. In a similar study, Richardson et al. (2011) found that a dominant Black woman consultant, just like the dominant white man consultant, was perceived as more hireable than a dominant white woman or Black man and was also less disliked.

Other studies of agency-oriented contexts suggest similar effects. Ong (2005) reports that Black women who were physics graduate students

strategically adopted a "loud Black girl" persona as a means of breaking through their intersectional invisibility in order to demonstrate their competence as scientists. Wingfield (2008) found that while Black professionals experienced workplace feeling rules against anger to be more constraining of them than whites, Black women could get away with expressions of anger when Black men could not.

The ability to act highly assertively and authoritatively in agentic contexts without triggering a gender or race backlash is a social relational opportunity created for Black women by intersecting hegemonic gender and race stereotypes. It is not easy to take advantage of this opportunity, however, due to further problems created by the effects of these intersecting stereotypes in relational contexts. Black women must first gain access to relational contexts that value and reward agency and leadership, contexts typically associated with higher-level business and professional jobs. Black women's access to these jobs is made more difficult by the default class assumptions embedded in racial prototypes.

Once within such contexts, Black women must break through their relative invisibility to get others to notice them and take them seriously. They must also counter another aspect of the stereotype of Blacks that creates challenges that are different from those faced by white women. While both "women" and "Blacks" are stereotyped as diffusely less competent at desirable skills than are white men, the basis of the presumed competence difference for the two groups is a little different. In contemporary gender stereotypes, (white) "women" are now seen as similar to "men" in the softer aspects of agency associated with intellectual skills (e.g., intelligent, analytic), but still behind men in the forceful agency presumed to be necessary to master events and exercise authority (Prentice and Carranza 2002; Rudman et al. 2012). In current stereotypes, "Blacks," however, are seen as having forceful agency but as either explicitly or implicitly lagging behind "whites" in intellectual skills (Fiske 2010; Goff et al. 2008). Although likely to be less strongly stereotyped in this way (because they are less prototypical) than Black men, Black women are still likely to have to work harder to prove their underlying ability in the workplace and elsewhere than are similar white women. Proving high ability, in turn, is likely a necessity for Black women to take full advantage of their opportunity to act highly assertively in an effort to achieve a position of leadership in a work or other context. Finally, because they do face a type of "double jeopardy" in proving competence, once in a leadership position, they are likely to have little margin for errors in performance. Rosette and Livingston (2012) found

that Black women leaders were judged more harshly for mistakes made on the job compared to white women and Black men leaders.

It is clear, then, that being off diagonal of the two primary frames of gender and race creates considerably more social relational binds for Black women than freedoms. If Black women manage to achieve access to a context and role that rewards agency, their distinctive intersectional position affords them some unexpected freedoms to act authoritatively. Yet, because of their same intersectional position, the barriers Black women face in gaining access to such contexts are more formidable than those faced by other groups (McGuire and Reskin 1993).

Class and Race Binds

What about the characteristic intersectional "binds" created by class in social relational contexts? We have argued that because class is a culturally less essentialized difference, some class indicators that become salient in a given context (dress, education) combine more simply with other social differences than do race and gender. On the other hand, class also has intersectional effects through the default assumptions about class that are embedded in the essentialized prototypes of white–Black race in particular. As a result, poor whites or whites in low-status jobs are also "off diagonal" people.

In social relational contexts in which white–Black race is salient, poor whites should also find themselves subject to distinctive cultural "binds" created by intersecting hegemonic beliefs about class and race. Cultural assumptions about whiteness, shared by whites and Blacks alike, have embedded within them the presumption of individual responsibility for class outcomes. That is, to be white is to be a free player, one who enjoys full agency, in the American dream of the self-made person. As free players, however, poor whites may be held fully accountable for a personal "failure" to achieve and treated with contempt. McDermott (2006) makes this argument about the interactions she observed with white clerks working in dead-end jobs in convenience stores on the boundary between Black and white neighborhoods in Boston and Atlanta. The clerks were often subjected to dismissive remarks from Black customers. In most cases, the white clerks reacted submissively, feeling they had little cultural ground on which to defend themselves. In an even clearer illustration of the "bind" of poor whites, McDermott (2010), in another study, describes a community of poor Appalachian whites who have embraced an identity as "Black" on the grounds that they may have distant ancestors of African-Indian origin. As her interview evidence

shows, they have reidentified as Black as a way of stepping aside from the social disparagement they felt at being poor whites.

McDermott (2006, 2010) also shows, however, that context matters in how poor whites react to the cultural binds they feel in settings in which race and class are both salient. The racially homogeneous environment of the Appalachian whites meant that they were freer to reidentify as "Black" since they paid little social cost for doing so compared to what they would experience in a racially mixed context. Also, in the convenience stores in Atlanta, which has few institutions of white working-class solidarity, white clerks were more likely to react submissively to dismissive remarks from Blacks than in Boston, which has a tradition of such institutions.

INTERSECTIONAL IMPLICATIONS FOR CHANGE AND REPRODUCTION

When race, gender, and class intersect to shape interpersonal influence and status inequalities, the cultural beliefs that constitute each of the systems are called to jointly make sense of the distribution of the shared resources and justify it in a coherent way. Thus, these cultural beliefs ought to not only explain and justify the division of the (shared) resources but to also logically fit the cultural schemas of each of the three separate systems. So, for example, cultural justifications for the systematic labor force disadvantages for poor white men not only explain why this group suffers from inequality compared to other groups but also fit with the stereotypes constituting each one of the systems of hierarchy (beliefs about men compared to women, whites compared to Blacks or Asians, and rich compared to poor). For these reasons, and in order to justify the atypical distributions that arise when systems overlap, "off diagonal" people are often characterized as exceptions to the general rules according to which we explain the behaviors of self and other. As a result, the cultural beliefs about the behavior of prototypical people are preserved (and so are the systems of inequalities). For example, when Black women are categorized as exceptions who are more masculine than white women and more feminine than Black men, hegemonic race and gender stereotypes are preserved and the inequalities that result are justified.

But points of intersection across the systems may also carry with them the potential to create structural opportunities for change. Over time, encounters with "off diagonal," unprototypical people who are still categorized as members of their group (even if exceptional ones), but are freer to behave in atypical, nonstereotypical ways, may gradually

create "openings"—opportunities for change in our beliefs regarding the behavior of prototypical members. As a result, our beliefs about how prototypical members of a group behave may gradually change as a result of repeated interactions with nonprototypical members. Encounters with "off diagonal" people—like successful Black women—however, are likely to affect our beliefs about race, gender, and class only when such encounters reach a critical mass and visibility that is impossible to dismiss.

CONCLUSIONS

Our intersectional analysis has focused on the social relational level as the arena in which the multiple characteristics of individuals are simultaneously present—some more essentialized than others—and therefore intersect to create challenges and possibilities for actors. Our approach has been twofold. First, we have considered gender, race, and class as culturally distinct systems of inequality not because they really are separate but because people routinely treat them as such, and this has consequences. The cultural construction of gender, race, and class as explicitly distinct when they implicitly overlap creates characteristic interactional "binds" and freedoms for actors that are "off diagonal" in that they do not match the hegemonic, stereotypic prototype of their gender, race, or class categories. As we have shown, these binds and freedoms not only vary by the content of the contradicting stereotypes but also depend on the context and its cultural meaning. As a result, the same group of "off diagonal" people may be bound and disadvantaged in some relational contexts while allowed some freedoms and opportunities in others.

Second, while sociologists have long recognized many of the cultural contradictions and binds we describe, we have attempted to offer a systematic account of these binds that links sociocognitive research on how people perceive others with sociological understandings of gender, race, and class as structures of inequality that involve both cultural beliefs and material arrangements. This account suggests that class differences may be more "fungible" than gender and race in that class's varying elements (a job, an education) may sometimes combine as well as complexly intersect with other differences. Also, freedoms, not merely binds, may be available primarily to those who are unprototypical of a status disadvantaging (woman, Black) rather than advantaging (man, white) category.

Our analysis focused on Black women as a strong analytic example of this point. They are "doubly off diagonal" on both race and gender in

ways that create freedoms as well as binds. Groups who are similar in some ways that we did not address are lesbian women and gay Black men, who also experience conflicting cultural expectations when the sexual orientation system intersects with gender and/or race. Although they are members of two disadvantaged groups, lesbian mothers are viewed as more committed and competent workers compared to heterosexual mothers (Peplau and Fingerhut 2004). Similarly, in a resume experiment with a representative sample, Pedulla (2012) found that a gay Black man applying for a managerial job faced less prejudice than a gay white man or a straight Black man.

Our analysis suggests that intersections among the race, gender, and class systems in social relations tend to reproduce the cultural beliefs and stereotypes that constitute each one of them. Nonetheless, as we have seen, when windows of opportunities open to create freedoms for "off diagonal" people, stereotypes and cultural beliefs may be eventually transformed.

NOTES

1. Codes of social difference are the fundamental basis for categorizing ourselves as *similar* to, as well as different from, others.

2. Although age is also a primary cultural frame for social relations in the United States (Schneider 2004, 96) and an important basis of inequality, we do not address it in this initial account for pragmatic reasons. Because age generates a U-shaped pattern of status disadvantage and is a nonvoluntary difference that changes over the life course, it is a more complex system to analyze. Although we leave it for future work, it is clear that age has intersectional effects. Consider the difference in the cultural associations with "old Black man" versus "young Black man" or "middle-aged white woman" versus "middle-aged white man."

3. Note that this result supports the argument that as a category of person perception, class is not as strongly essentialized as are gender and race.

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